

# 2002 Legislative Preview



*For the people of the  
15th Legislative District,  
encompassing Yakima,  
Benton, Klickitat and  
Skamania counties.*

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## Senator Jim Honeyford

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Rep. Bruce Chandler

Rep. Barb Lisk

Sen. Jim Honeyford

November 2001

Dear friends,

The terrible attacks on the United States have, unfortunately, brought a new perspective to the challenges that face our state's Legislature. We are responding to the effects of a statewide drought and high-cost energy shortage. We're working to improve our economy by providing relief through reforms to help local businesses and our agriculture industry, and by making improvements to our transportation system. In addition, we are trying to better manage our water and other natural resources while protecting private property rights.

These are small concerns compared to the tragedies that struck our nation's capital, New York City and rural Pennsylvania. Those who have suffered and our national leaders continue to need our prayers and support.

This newsletter provides a report on many of the items that still require our attention in the Legislature. We all recognize how privileged we are, as Americans, to have the ability to resolve issues and address our citizens' needs through self-governance and elected representation.

Our thanks go to those of you who took the time to respond to our recent transportation survey. The results of this questionnaire are included inside this newsletter. We are honored to represent the citizens of the 15th District. As always, we welcome your comments and questions.

Sincerely,

State Senator

State Representative

State Representative

**INSIDE:** *Budget Challenges*

*Your response to our  
transportation questions*

*Increasing job  
opportunities*

### Operating budget poses a challenge for lawmakers

More difficult decisions are in store for lawmakers this year, as our state's economy continues to slow and citizens statewide demand more services. Just six months into our two-year budget cycle, it looks as though lawmakers will be forced to cut expenditures in order keep the budget in balance. The collection of tax revenues has been steadily slowing due to our cooling economy.

Meanwhile, health care costs are rising substantially. We also have incurred \$10 million in emergency expenses fighting wildfires this summer. In addition, security issues at schools and other public facilities have become a paramount concern.

It is essential that we work together in the coming months to bring this budget back into balance.

### State's business climate must be improved

While the Puget Sound region has enjoyed a thriving and diversified economy, which in recent years has been fueled by the high-tech industry and Boeing, Eastern Washington's agriculture-based economy has suffered. Nowhere has that been more evident than in the Yakima Valley, where water and energy shortages, unstable markets and onerous business regulations have hurt farmers, ranchers, growers and businesses throughout our community.

In recent months, the Puget Sound region's economy has cooled, as many "dot-com" companies have folded and Boeing has announced massive layoffs.

### 2001-03 Budget Picture

The latest economic forecast released in September showed a drop in tax revenue of more than \$100 million in the current biennium. That was before economists had a chance to factor in the effects of the Sept. 11 attack on our state and national economy.

<b>2001-03 Projected Tax Revenues</b>	<b>..... \$22,021,800</b>
<b>2001-03 Budget Expenditures</b>	<b>..... \$22,786,783</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>..... -\$765 million</b>

<b>Unrestricted General Fund Reserve</b>	<b>.... \$66 million</b>
<b>Emergency Reserve</b>	<b>..... \$390 million</b>

We believe that the most effective way to revitalize Eastern Washington's economy is to improve our state's business climate. We want to improve this climate so existing businesses can thrive here and out-of-state companies will choose to locate in Washington.

We recently hosted a meeting with businesspeople throughout the 15th District and listened to their thoughts and suggestions on improving the business climate. These ideas, as well as your comments, have been helpful as we work together to produce several bills for the upcoming session.

### Legislature to continue work on water issues

Last session, the Legislature passed one of the most important water bills in decades. That measure aims to reduce the backlog of water rights applications. While passage of that bill was great news for Central Washington, there are other water issues that must be resolved.

During the past few months, Sen. Honeyford and Rep. Chandler have continued working on various water issues. In



fact, they were appointed to the state Joint Executive-Legislative Water Policy Group, which has met several times this fall to create new legislation for the 2002 session. Sen. Honeyford and Rep. Chandler are working on legislation to deal with the following issues:

- Set instream flows at scientifically derived levels that are realistic (not exceeding natural flow conditions) and meet fish needs, too
- Increase flexibility to transfer water to instream purposes
- Allow flexibility in movement of water between municipal water jurisdictions to accommodate growth
- Extend the water relinquishment period
- Adequately fund water storage projects

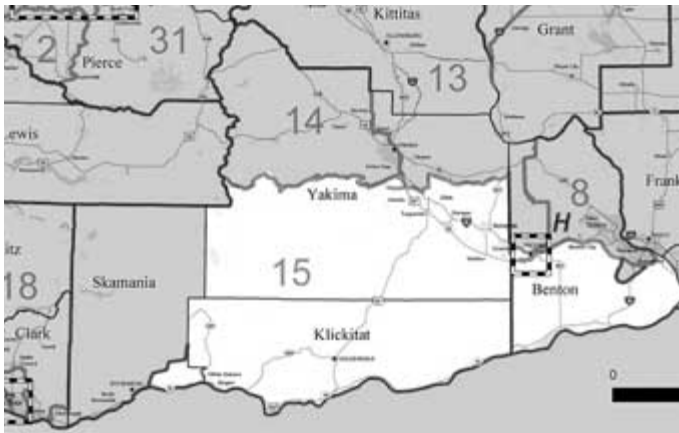
### Drawing new legislative maps

*Redistricting brings new neighbors into 15th District fold*

The state redistricting commission has come out with four proposed plans for redrawing the boundaries of our state's legislative districts. Each calls for new areas to be added to the 15th District.

The commission is required to develop a final plan by early next year that will determine the new boundaries for legislative and congressional districts in our state to ensure equal distribution in population. This is done every ten years based on new census data.

Because population in the 15th Legislative District has not kept pace with the rest of the state, the district will be drawn larger to take in more people. The most likely outcome will be for the district boundaries to reach further west, perhaps into Skamania County or north Yakima County, where the population has increased at a higher rate.



**Current boundaries of the 15th Legislative District**

It may be possible that some of you living on the edges of the current 15th District will be redrawn into a neighboring district, such as the 8th or 16th to the east.

The commission expects to release its final redistricting proposal Dec. 3. If you have concerns or suggestions about the proposed district boundaries in the final plan, you can submit comments to the Redistricting Commission until Dec. 10.

#### **Washington State Redistricting Commission**

PO Box 40948

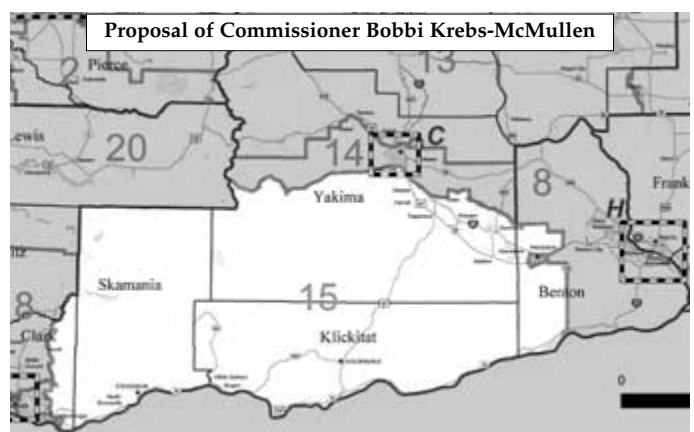
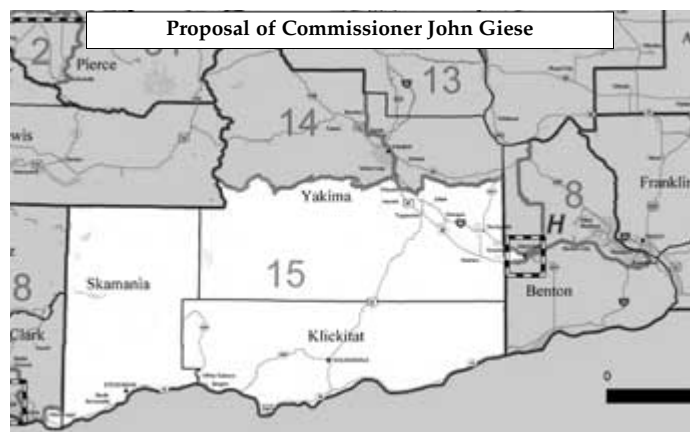
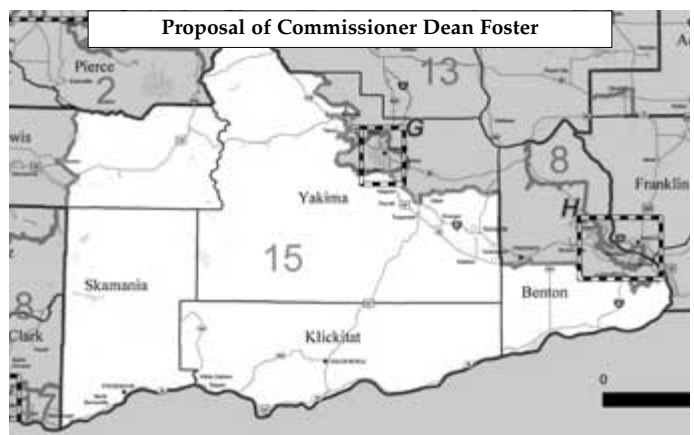
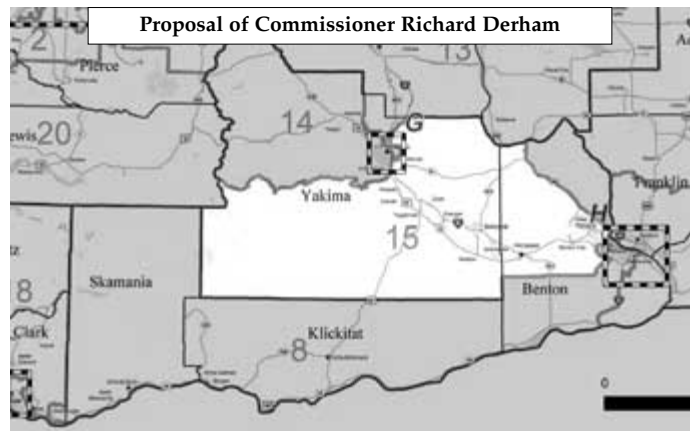
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### Your response to our questions about transportation

Many thanks to those of you who took time out of your busy day to answer the transportation survey in our last newsletter. Your views are helpful as we continue to debate the issue of transportation in our state. We thought you'd like to see how you and your neighbors throughout the 15th District responded.

#### 1. Would you support an increase in the gas tax to pay for transportation improvements?

73% No  
27% Yes

#### 2. If yes, how much of an increase would you support?

51% 1-3 cents per gallon  
31% 4-6 cents per gallon  
11% 7-9 cents per gallon  
7% 10-15 cents per gallon

#### 3. Which of the following would you also support to raise money for transportation improvements?

45% None of the following  
20% Increased weight fees for trucks

20% New weight fees for motor homes  
11% 12-cent per gallon surcharge on diesel  
4% An increase in the sales tax on car purchases

#### 4. Which of the following best describes your opinion on the need for efficiencies in transportation?

61% I oppose new taxes for transportation and believe the Legislature should adopt more efficiencies to make sure existing taxes are better spent  
26% I would only support tax increases for transportation if the Legislature adopted more efficiencies to make sure the money is better spent  
11% I believe our transportation system could be more efficient, but I still believe new taxes are needed to complete important projects  
2% I believe our transportation system is very efficient, and we need new taxes to complete important projects

#### 5. If the Legislature was to consider raising new taxes for transportation, what is your opinion about putting it to a public vote?

81% The public should be allowed to vote on it, absolutely  
12% No, we elect lawmakers to represent us and they should make these decisions  
7% I'm undecided as to whether the public should vote

#### 6. How many miles do you normally drive per week?

39% More than 100 miles a week  
18% Between 25 and 50 miles a week  
16% Between 50 and 75 miles a week  
14% Up to 25 miles a week  
13% Between 75 and 100 miles a week

#### 7. The latest proposal for funding nearly \$9 billion in transportation improvements over the next 10 years include a 9-cent gas tax increase, an additional 3-cent increase on diesel, a 10% increase on weight fees for trucks and motor homes, and a 1.5% increase in the sales tax on new and used vehicles. If placed on the ballot, how would you be inclined to vote on this package?

79% No  
11% Yes  
9% Undecided